

FISH & WILDLIFE COMMISSION AGENDA ITEM COVER SHEET

Meeting Date: June 11, 2015

Agenda Item: Tendoy Bighorn Sheep Proposal Status

Division: Wildlife

Action Needed: Informational

Time Needed on Agenda for this Presentation: 15 minutes

Background

In December, FWP informed the Fish & Wildlife Commission of the concept of depopulating the struggling population of bighorn sheep in the Tendoy Mountains, hunting district 315, to make way for restocking the same range with healthy sheep. In February, the Commission adopted the necessary hunting district boundary and license quota changes to make way for the proposed depopulation and restocking project. In April, FWP informed the Commission of the release of a draft environmental assessment on the project. A copy of the EA was forwarded to Commissioners on April 21 and is also included in this meeting's Commission packet. The public comment period on the EA ended on May 22. Comments are being analyzed and responded to for use in the preparation of a Decision Notice to be issued before June 11, the date of this Commission meeting, by Region 3 Supervisor, Sam Sheppard, who has decision authority. Pending that decision, FWP will ask the Commission to approve for public comment issuing over-the-counter either-sex bighorn sheep licenses for the Tendoy Mountains, HD 315, to begin the depopulation phase of the depopulation/restocking project in the fall of 2015. If, in the Decision Notice, the decision is made to not go forward with the project, or to not proceed at this time because of issues identified in analyzing comments, FWP will make no such request for licenses.

Public Involvement Process & Results

Public notification of the EA release and opportunities to comment were made by a statewide press release; two legal notices in each of the Helena, Butte, Dillon, Bozeman, Billings, Great Falls, Kalispell, Missoula and Miles City newspapers; direct mailings to adjacent landowners and interested parties; and a public notice on the FWP webpage. Copies of the EA were available at FWP Region 3 Headquarters in Bozeman and on the FWP website. A public meeting was held on May 7 in Dillon where 12 people attended. FWP received a total of 16 comments online or in writing.

Alternatives and Analysis

In addition to the No Action Alternative, there were four other alternatives considered but eliminated from further analysis as outlined in the EA.

Agency Recommendation & Rationale

N/A

Proposed Motion

No motion is necessary for an informational item